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The Omen

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Front Cover and Back Cover by
Fiona & Allison

Policy

The Omen is a biweekly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: **we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous.** Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. **The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it.** Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish. **Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views.** (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Thursday nights in the basement of Merrill on a computer with an honestly pretty adequate monitor; nowadays. You should come. We don't bite. **You can find the Omen on other Thursdays in the Dining Commons, the post office, or on the door of your mod** (if we get to putting it on doors, anyway).

TO SUBMIT

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in rich text or plain text format by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu or Rachel Ithen, Box 1413.

Editorial:

Editorial About Nothing

Well hello Omen readers and welcome to another edition of, uhm, the Omen. I guess if you're an Omen reader then it's pretty obvious that you're reading the Omen. Anywho.

As I'm sitting here trying to think about what to write for an editorial, a million thoughts seem to be scattered in my brain. First I think of what a nice place the Airport Lounge is, except that whenever I do an 11-2am shift I smell like coffee for the rest of the night. And whenever I do the 8-11pm shift it always gets loud and I have to be awkward and tell people to quiet down. And whenever I do a 2-5am or 5-8am shift I'm tired. But I do it all for you, APL dwellers. I hope my late night presence keeps you company and your craving of tea or coffee is satisfied.

But I'm not going to write an entire editorial about being an Airport Lounge monitor. The next thing that pops into my head are all the events I have planned for the remainder of the semester. I guess it wouldn't hurt to shamelessly plug some things I'm excited about, like Deathfest on March 10th or a Div III circus performance I'll be in on April 10th and 11th or my tentative Div II pass meeting on May 3rd.

OhgodI'mfinishingDivisionII

In all seriousness though, where the hell did the last three years ago? I try to imagine myself in high school again and it feels like a century ago, but I also don't feel like I'm supposed to leave here yet. There are people graduating in the Spring who I can honestly say were my first friends at Hampshire, the first people to start a conversation with me and sit with me in Saga so I wasn't all on my lonesome. And now those people are big fancy adults who will have in their hands come May

19th a lovely circular diploma and then they will be off to the real world to do grownup things.

And a year from that date, I will be one of them.

(Or at least I better be.)

I used to be one of Hampshire's biggest defenders, but I've been screwed over one too many times to say that I absolutely and unconditionally adore it here. Hampshire is fun, but it's not my home. Despite this, it's still my college. It's my undergraduate college experience. I'm not going to get another four years like this.

I guess I made the mistake of choosing such a somber theme for my editorial, because now I don't know how to end it. I think regardless of what I do, I'm just going to end up sounding like the last few lines of a movie. Welp, might as well make it fun.

"And crawling on the planet's face, some insects called the human race. Lost in time, and lost in space...and meaning."

Rachel Ithen



THE OMEN HAIKU
*views in the Omen
do not necessarily
reflect the staff's views*

Section: Speak

Freewill and Responsibility

The Formation of the Free Will and its Implications

Charles Haigh

What is a free will? I am interested in the libertarian view in this piece, and will be describing it in as explicit terms as are possible and attempting to trace the implications of the view that it describes. Here, free is meant in the sense that one would refer to yourself, not in the sense that one would another object. The food is free does not refer to free in the sense we mean, there it means simply "Without cost to the one who wishes to acquire/make use of it". This "free" is freedom, from restriction and constraint, specifically those that impinge upon the will and determine what forms it can and cannot take and what directions it can and cannot lead one to. It is the same sense that one would use the word free in reference to slavery or other form of restriction of action. Now, it is obvious that by "free" one means completely unrestrained. While this is accepted at face value, it bears a little bit of unpacking. "Free" does literally mean without constraint or restriction, but our experience of our behavior has inherent in it many restrictions. As this notion of will is intended to be a description of a set of behaviors or the metaphysical condition of humans, it will not contain any falsities that are incredibly obvious without any discussion or thought. It does, however entail some lack of constraint. To be free, there must be in some sense or in some way in which that the will is not constrained. Which is synonymous with its outcome and form being not determined, for if those are a given, it is completely constrained to what they will dictate.

Will does not itself entail free will by any means. A will is merely a condition of preference or interest in an actor. If this will is caused (definitionally not free) it is nonetheless a will, and that does not preclude it from being my will any more than my foot being made up of introduced constituent parts (being caused) precludes

it from being my foot. It is the will that the person I is aware of in a full sense. By full, I mean not aware of by description or by inference from behavior. The will of another can only be known by asking and receiving a language-based answer by which some understanding of it can be acquired. This understanding is not a full one, in the same sense that a description of any experience by another cannot tell you everything about it. My description of seeing red can tell you many things about red, but it cannot tell you what seeing red is like; it cannot tell you the experience of red. One may also infer will from behavior, often correctly, but this understanding of will has all of the shortcomings of the description by the person whose will it is as well as all of the faults of observation. Therefore my will is the will that I experience, and have a full knowledge of as a result of that experience. This full knowledge does not entail knowledge of the cause of such a will (especially when that is free, as this is definitionally impossible to know), simply experiential knowledge of the will. This is a description of will whether it is free or not. In the future, however, I will not be using the word in this sense. Will is used to mean "Free Will" unless explicitly stated otherwise.

A description of how the world would operate given this system of the will is necessary. At T0 it must be possible for me to take action A or $\neg A$ (for I am never free to choose to fly or to jump through a steel wall). Then at T2 there is a universe in which I took action A. There is also a divergent universe (this will be T2') in which I took action $\neg A$. To be free in relation to A, the point of divergence between these two universes, T1 must vary in only one aspect: my will. To possess free will, this description of possibility and action must hold true for some subset of my actions. I do not believe that this description of free will is coherent (regardless of what other positions you accept) if it is required that for all actions taken that this be the case. This would only be true in a completely uncaused world. For in a caused world we can imagine many cases in which you did or did not take action A at T2 not based off of your will, but just because this is sometimes (or even often) the case, does not preclude free will itself. The only way to dis-

cern the effects of free will is in such a vacuum. It may very well be the case that in our two alternate worlds *W* and *W'* that the will is what varied and what created the difference in behavior (hence that action would be free). In any case where other facts of the world are modified it may be the case that the change in action is merely contingent on that fact (even if it does not seem natural to suppose that that particular change could have modified action in that manner), so the change of non-will factors will obscure the effects of will. Even beyond this principle of observation of the will, it must be in principle possible (even if it never actually occurs) that the will, and hence action, be modified with no other fact being different for it to make sense to say that the will is not completely constrained by other facts. For if will always only (can only) varies in conjunction with those other facts, even if they are inconsistent in nature, it is clear that it cannot be disentangled from them and must in some sense be constrained by them (if only in the sense that their presence is needed, rather than some more clear-cut causal relation).

How can will have reason, which we all experience it to, and still be free in the sense that I have described it? We have all asked the question "Why did you choose to do that?" which means "Why was that your will?" (though no one asks this rather awkward question) and understood that question to make sense. The people who ask and understand such questions generally experience their wills as if they were free, and people who explicitly think they have free will as a metaphysical proposition still often ask such question. What meaning do they tend to have, or could they have, when we assume will free of total constraint? Nagell sees some space for free will in our understanding of reason. When asked "Why did you go outside?" (or "What was your reason for doing do") I give the response "It was warm inside." That is the reason I went outside. But it does not, however, explain the question "Why that reason?" As there are other reasons I still possessed not to go outside "I'm lazy," "It's wet outside", etc. The question becomes why this reason is the one that your will chose (in this description of it) to be your reason. Perhaps this is the space that our will can operate within? One may simply dismiss this going one layer deeper in understanding, however. "You chose to go outside rather than stay inside because it being hot inside mattered more to you than it being wet outside did". This invites the same

counter; why value that reason? And it may be understood that the argument continues with deeper levels of explanation.

If the will is to be understood as free, then it must at some point come to the conclusion explained above: that my will determined which thing to value more, or which reason to make my reason, or whatever level it is existent at. There must be some question that when you are asked, "Why did you do that?" (perhaps to a very deep description of behavior, beyond general action, beyond reason, beyond preference, etc.) to which my answer must be simply "I [freely] chose to" (Or similarly, and perhaps more in line with the vocabulary we're using "I willed it to be the case"). It must be, in some sense of the term, a "chain stopper" if you will. Meaning that it ends the chain of causal-questions (ends from the perspective of the action backwards). The answer "I chose to" must be acceptable as an ultimate and final answer to the question of "Why did you do that?" for it must be in some ultimate sense (at least some of the time) that the will caused the action unto itself. It may only do this by dictating which motives and reasons would move us, but it is itself still First Cause in those circumstances. It chose a preference, which chose a value, which chose a reason, and so on.

In asking "Why did you do that?" if I say "My will was not caused," you are likely to respond "Then it was random?" which puts us in no better a boat. A general understanding of what cause even means is in negative terms: it is something that wasn't random. Random, problematically enough, is often described in much the same terms: something that had results which were not deterministically caused. The general view is that either something was caused, and that this cause is its explanation, or that it has no cause at all (and thus is random). This view is assumed under our conception of will to be wholly false. This description of the will must conceive of something different to maintain coherence. There must be cause, random, and will itself².

An obvious point of this argument for free will is that it exists. One may not make a claim without making the claim that that claim is true. The proposition "P" entails necessarily "P is true". This is a metaphysical claim. Metaphysical claims are claims about what exist. As such, the claim being made in the form of the proposition "F" (Freewill) necessarily entails this claim "Free will exists". Most of our conceptions of what it means to

exist are largely at odds with this uncaused description of will I have given. An understood implication of "This exists" is "This at some point did not exist". This may not be a correct understanding, but it is still a general one. The presupposition of all things is that they came from somewhere, they they were in some way fashioned or created. So how can we reconcile this view with this notion of will? We have dismissed cause as necessarily deterministic in nature and thereby to the exclusion of will, so the will must not be caused by outside forces.

Can it instead be *causa sui*? We understand this to be a logical impossibility. To create something, that thing must first not exist. Those things which do not exist cannot bear on the world, because being able to effect is what existence means by and large. Thereby something cannot create itself because it cannot act before it exists, and creation is an action. This is the logical construction and indicates that things being their own cause is impossible.

May the will simply be infinite, in a sense of time, and in this way be uncaused? There needed not be anything that caused it to exist because there was no time when it did not exist? Infinite regressions are in general a sign the argument is going poorly, and they have no real explanatory power in the sense that they do not really explain anything any further than to say "It is the case". As well, this indicates that an infinite amount of time ago, there was a will. While a line (thereby infinite) with a dot at the middle may seem like a fine analogy of present, when actually explored it becomes problematic. How precisely does someone get to "now" from an infinite distance? If time has no beginning in any sense, then every point in time is an infinite distance from the beginning, and one must always move an infinite period of time to get to the current one (whichever that is). This view precludes currency in any sense. As an infinite regression of will requires an infinite regression of time, it too inherits this problem.

Then whence cometh the will? It is not self-caused. It did not exist eternally. Did it simply *pop* spring into existence? This seems to imply that it was entirely random, but I have already argued that something simply having no causal explanation does not mean it is not random, that these are not the only two viable explanations. Very sadly, however, the alternative to the two I have suggested is the will. So perhaps other

will create wills? Not helpful in the slightest. Do we need to posit yet another, fourth, fundamental, basal, and completely ununderstandable structure to account for the will? That will certainly not help, as it will run into the same problem as the will does.

Again, problematically, is that this construction of the will is getting very far outside of ourselves. We understood will to be a personal quality, the thing itself that defined us as actors. But instead we have an unwieldy force of nature well beyond even the usual forces of gravity: each human possesses his or her own unique random and cause? Not a claim I wish to make, but to understand will as uncaused in the way it is we must either accept it as not of the sort of thing to need creation, such as randomness and causation, or accept that there is no way for it to exist without being caused, as I have argued above. The question comes basically to this form. Is the will an object, or a force? Of an object the question of source makes sense. Of a force on the realm of causality it does not. Asking someone "What caused causality? Where did it come from?" is not likely to get an answer beyond a confused face. The question itself seems not to apply to forces as it does to objects. However, the nature of the fundamental difference between the two is unclear. In the usual physicalist description it is obvious enough: material and non-material. But we are not assuming physicalism here. The notion of a mental object in opposition to mental forces makes sense, but understanding the difference is not easy. As such I am not sure which the will would be better understood as. It is clear, however, this it is very hard to imagine a force in such a sense, directed by us, and within us in some way. An object, meanwhile, would be much more understandable on those terms. However, the object has difficulties in cause and operation that the notion of force does not. The perspective is unclear.

Can it have constituent parts? Well, certainly not parts of a usual nature. Parts of a usual nature have causes, come from places, and are generally and essentially deterministic. As such, if the things that made up a will were formed in the usual manner, it seems hard to imagine that the will could become something entirely outside of its make up. Perhaps some sort of emergent property of a certain make up of ordinary matter produces uncaused will. This does not imply that the will does not come from its constituent parts, it must for

them to make it up. But perhaps the form those parts has does not constrain the will, and it can remain undetermined, yet still caused. This seems unlikely. How would it do so? By their very nature, usual deterministic parts can only have deterministic results. If they do not, it must be by some mechanism which neuters them of this ability. If they are to causally make up an uncaused will, something must first essentially remove the effect of their causal nature. If there is such a thing, then it is that thing which is the will. And that thing would not be made up of constituent parts, and would be the will, instead of the thing we mistook for will. Perhaps you could imagine that it could neuter the causal parts of itself as a quality of itself. But where would this will constituent of normal bits get such an ability? From those bits? Certainly not. Hence, it is the true will which must do so. As such it cannot be made up of normal things. If any, it must be made from parts which have the same qualities as will itself, uncaused, undetermined, first, etc. If so, it makes no real sense to call the whole system will rather than the parts itself will instead. As such, will cannot be made up from parts, because the only parts it could be made up of would be of a will nature, and then it is those parts which would be the true will and not the totality of them.

Thus the will takes an atomic, First Cause, uncaused, and fundamentally basal form. But what are the implications of such a system of will, as I have described the libertarian view? What metaphysical views must we accept? What understandings of cause are implied?

By what mechanisms could such a strange thing interact and behave? The first answer is shut up. Such a question displays a fundamental misunderstanding of the premise itself. If this will operated on fundamentally understandable underlying principles it would not even be what we are defining. It would be just another causal system. But still, one wonders how it does things, even if they are not understandable in the same sense that other mechanisms and structures are. I would answer that it operates as mysteriously as cause and randomness do, its compatriots in basality. How does a cause operate? Neither Hume³ nor you know, I think. As he says, we simply observe one thing occurring, and then another, over and over. We perceive that this means that one causes the other, but we cannot truly explain what that means. What would you say? A caused B because "the occurrence of A created a situation of necessity in

which B would occur"? Simply masking the fact that "created a situation of necessity" just means "caused". All of our explanations of it would be in such hidden terms, A made B happen, A resulted in B, A produced B. The same is true of randomness: it cannot be explained in more basal terms than "without cause" or other terms which simply mean the same as random. This applies also to will. To say that I will something I would explain it by saying that I chose it. Or that I wished for it to occur. Or to say that I acted with that intent, or some other hidden description. None of these basal understandings of mechanism are understandable or describable in more fundamental terms. Causal and random are more basic than the quark in our understanding of the physical and all other operations, such would the will need to be.

Does this view require a dualist or even idealist view of the world? I say even, because while dualism is by and large out of favor among those currently studying the Philosophy of the Mind, idealism is even further from being accepted widely. It may be the case that this view of will requires dualism or idealism because it may be the case that this version of the will describes a metaphysical construct which could not, in fact, be physical. It is our immediate intuition that if the will is described as anything but a derivative brain state, ie. certain neurochemicals, certain electrical patterns across neurons, etc., that it must be a purely mental object, ie., non-physical. Is this the case? Could it be material (this has a clear definition: made of matter)? This is hard to believe. We understand matter to always take a given form as a result of processes that form matter and thereby dictate the ways in which it can act and interact with the world. This conception of the behavior of matter is very hard to reconcile with this description of will. Operating in such a predictable structured manner, which is a necessity of the arrangement of matter as far as we understand it, stands in direct contradiction to this description of will. Another immediate thought is that matter has certain characteristics that seem very conceptually difficult to ascribe to this will. What color is it? How much space does it take up? Where is it located? These are the general objections raised in descriptions of the Mind that play well to our description of this will. None of them seem easy to ascribe to it and therefore we are inclined to conclude that they do not

apply, hence the mind is non-physical. However, how much space does argon take up? What color is a protozoa? We think that both of these questions are in essence answerable, that it is simply our poor personal perception of the physical world that restricts us from giving the qualities that these material objects have. We believe that science (or something akin to it) can and does give us these qualities. Really, this is not the case. Argon does not take up a certain amount of space, nor does any gas. That is in fact part of the definition of a gas: neither a given shape nor given volume. To describe a protozoa as colored is a poor interpretation of the word colored; they do not possess this quality in any real way. Still, if our perceptions are to be taken as important measures of our understanding of objects and of truth, will lacks many necessary functions and structures that might make it material.

Can it be physical? Gravity, electromagnetic forces, and strong and weak nuclear forces are all certainly physical descriptions of the world by our conception. But they are certainly not material. Is it possible then to describe the will in such terms? It has sometimes been suggested, in fact, that the will is simply another fundamental force in the universe. Thereby it is able to be both in line with our common perceptions of free will as well as the largely common agreement that the world is physical in nature. No one really thinks materialism (as opposed to physicalism) is true anyway. Accepting this argument requires us to accept something fairly strange about humans, and gives up one of the advantages the dualist view had on physicalism. In dualism, why or how it is these physical bodies (our bodies) came to possess will, or why they, of all the things in the world are the only things to possess wills, is problematic. This question does not arise in physicalism, and is one of its advantages as a view. But if will is a fundamental force of the universe, this question arises anew, except now in the physical sphere. Why would we expect that only humans, of all things, can [make use of/produce/be directly involved with] (exactly which is not clear, but the idea is still comprehensible) this force? The other forces are universal in nature. All things produce gravity to some effect, all objects have some level of magnetism, and every object you've ever seen is held together by nuclear forces at a basic level. Will, how-

ever would not be so ubiquitous if it were a force as described. It would be a uniquely human (or uniquely person, if one does not believe humans to be the only persons) power. What gave this force to humans, and nothing else? It seems to beg a non-physical (deistic?) property or source, and may be incompatible with such a physicalist view then.

However, what does it mean to be physical? There is the fairly lame definition of things that are material or that act upon material things. This applies to the will, but it would also apply to any causal mental event of any sort, as we define causal in this instance as having an effect on the material plane. As such it is not highly useful in elucidating the difference between the physical and the mental (though it may indicate to us that the distinction itself is a false one, this idea is not well understood). Another definition of physical, then? Something which acts in accordance to physical law (physics) is an even more common one. It is problematic in that this describes the world in terms of our understanding of the world and description of it and essentially says that any time we incorrectly understand a phenomenon that phenomenon is not physical (in that it does not act in accordance with the laws of physics). However a simple counter is to say that things are physical when they act in line with the "true set of physics", a common philosophical and scientific construction about a true, full description of the world. This is problematic in that it implies one of two things, both of which may be unacceptable with our view. The first is that this implies a mathematical, and thereby entirely predictable, model of the interaction of the will. This is necessarily opposed to our description of it. If it can in principle be described and predicted in this manner, said to operate on the Guertel principle and in accordance with the Goldbach conjecture (that was intentionally mumbo-jumbo), if it operates on given mathematical principles, it simply cannot be what we were talking about as free will. If that is the case, then the will cannot be physical. However, if that is not a necessity, if it simply must be mentioned, perhaps, as part of the operation of the universe in this full-physics, then it is necessarily physical for everything that we know of to exist is physical by that description, for everything that can be understood and described is physical by that description.

What Makes You Creative

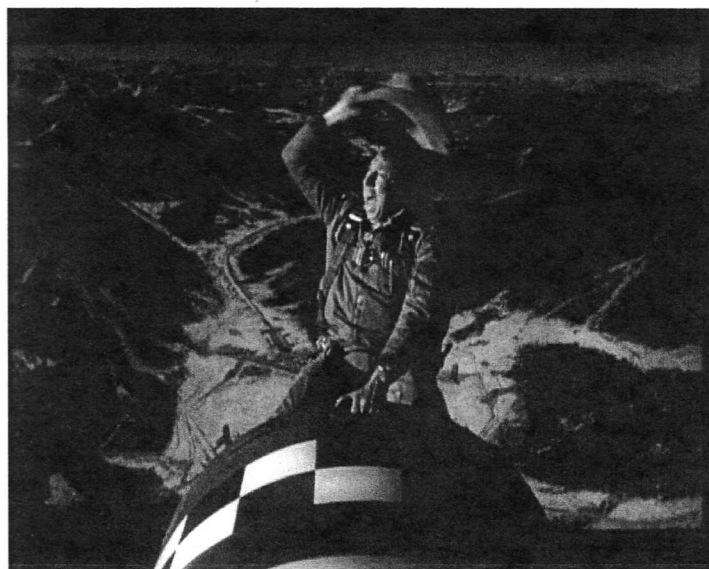
Zilong Wang

This is problematic with our view of what it simply means to be mental or physical, in the same way that the definition of physical given before it was problematic. It makes a dualist world indistinct from a physicalist world in every way. Now, this may be true, (and most physicalists think it is) because there may be no such thing as mental things, but the two ought to be conceptually distinct, and under both of these understandings of the word physical they are not. This does not challenge an idealist view as incoherent, as one can simply claim that there is no material in an idealist world and it is clearly distinct from the physical one. If the two are not distinct the question does not even make sense. But the only definition of physical that does not have this problem (a world, objects, and forces describable in mathematical, predictable terms) is necessarily determinist, it in fact presupposes it. While we generally think that determinism is an implication of our understanding of physical systems, this description does almost the opposite and presupposes determinism to physicalism, which is problematic in our understanding of physicalism in general. Further, the definition of free will we are making use of definitionally rejects determinism, so if physical is meant in this sense then free will is most certainly not physical.



Stephen Morton Saves the Day

Googled by Stephen Morton



Why are some people so creative? Why are they able to come up with revolutionary ideas?

Some say that creativity is a gift --- either you are born with it, or not. Others say that creativity is a discipline --- it can be learned and applied. Here I will speculate on what makes you creative.

1. Creativity is a habit. Always ask "why"; be curious and skeptical; surround yourself with creative energy and people; meditate; write a diary; etc. Most importantly, keep an open heart.
2. Creativity is the habit of breaking the habits. Inertia and repetition are among the top enemies of creativity. So, paradoxically, we must acquire a habit of breaking with the convention or the past. We must be willing to self-critique and step out of our comfort zone.
3. Creativity is a property of the mind. Out of the vast emptiness of the mind, wonderful ideas emerge. My best ideas always come into my mind first, and after a split-second, I become aware of the new idea. In our busy life these days, we keep ourselves distracted all the time, thus lose contact with our own mind.
4. Creativity arises from interdisciplinary efforts. Being narrowly focused on one area is like eating only one kind of food. It will create malnutrition. Mix them up!
5. Creativity comes from learning from the past. There's nothing new under the sun. History is full of inspiration.
6. Creativity requires us to embrace nature. Mother Nature is the source of all human creativity. Humans' best ideas are all stolen from the nature, but we never pay royalty for nature's intellectual property. Nowadays, as we confine ourselves into the man-made world, we are cutting off the root of imagination.

Let's end with a few things that make us less creative: Facebook, smart-phone, caffeine over-dosage, and sleep deprivation. I am not stereotyping college students.



What's Wrong with the World?

Zilong Wang

Everywhere we look, things are not right: failing regimes, falling growth rate, stalling democratic processes, worsening social unrest, decreasing physical and mental health, rising unemployment, increasing wealth gap, growing corporate influence, intensifying ecological destruction, shrinking resources, and less and less optimism and time. Geographically, no regions have been left unaffected by this systematic crisis in the global society. And as far as we can see, there's no light down in the tunnel.

We all know that things are not right. But what exactly is wrong? What's the root cause of all the sufferings? To answer this question, the Democrats blame the Republicans, and the Republicans blame the Democrats. And the rest of the U.S. blames the blaming-game between the Democrats and Republicans. The 99% blames the 1% for greed and crookedness; the 1% blames the 99% for being unemployable. Socialists blame the capitalists; the capitalists blame the terrorists. In one word, nobody is innocent, and everyone is the victim.

Part of the problem is that there are so many problems in the system that it becomes numbing and dizzying. However, this is exactly the right time for us to keep a cool head and a compassionate heart, and see through the surface to get to the root of the issue.

Like a good doctor treating a desperate patient, we will first look for symptoms of illness in today's system, and then try to make sense of them. I will arbitrarily put the world's problems into four categories:

1. Political

- Domestic politics is messed up. Old Social Contracts have been broken or have expired. There is a big disconnect between the older and younger generations, and between a helpless ruling elite and an awak-

ening civil society.

- International politics is messed up. Global governance is defunct, as is evident in the several rounds of climate talks. Military spending is on the rise globally, with nations ready for a fight.

2. Economic

- High unemployment. Technology is eliminating large number of job. There is a mismatch between the education system and the employers' demand.

- Lack of growth. The developed world hasn't seen much growth for a while, and the developing world is slowing down. Old growth model won't work anymore, but new models are too painful or too far away.

- Too much debt in the economy. Both households and nations are under huge amount of debt, which reduces their ability to spend and invest.

- Economic system is hitting the wall of ecosystem. The Earth's carrying capacity is being reached. Cost will go up.

3. Ecological

- Population is heading toward 9 billion by mid-century. Per capita consumption is rising. Human society's ecological footprint is unsustainable.

- Diminishing resources and a worsening environment are creating a double squeeze on current way of life--- a problem solely of our own making. We are seeing scarcity of energy, water, land, food, precious or rare metals, etc.

- The waste and toxicity in our ecosystem is a ticking time-bomb. We have over-drafted our children's resources, and have left them with our poisonous crap.

- As the ecosystem's health decline, so does the humans' health. We are living through the most obese, over-drugged phase of human history. All kinds of new illness are emerging --- no cures in sight.

- Today's culture is enslaved by money. Culture exists to stimulate our desires and glorify consumption. For example, culture creates a stereotype of beauty in order to sell plastic surgeries, cosmetics, etc., but leaves 99% of the girls constantly depressed.

- In our culture, you are what you own. Fetishism of commodities has gone to such extreme that people live by the motto of "I buy, therefore I am." Your value is not measured by your character, but your financial net worth. Virtue is not rewarded or respected.

- Faith in capitalism has replaced all other faiths as the dominant belief system. Making profit is an end in itself. Market is God, and money his angel. The spiritual vacuum has both created personal suffering, and opened the door to religious extremism.

- Globalization is creating big confusion and conflict between tradition and modernity, and between the West and the rest. There's not yet a set of universal value that unites all of us while accommodating our differences.

The list above has left out many important issues, but might be good enough for a first diagnosis of our patient. My next question is: what's the interconnection of these aspects of the problem? What's the cause and effect? Is there a "root of all evil"?

It is tempting to blame everything on "human nature." Indeed, greed and selfishness are an undeniable part of our nature. But saying so is not helpful: it both denies potential for good, and creates a sense of pessimism --- "it's in our blood, we are doomed."

If not "nature", then how about "nurture"? It seems like the system has been designed to bring out the worst within us, and throw us into the race to the bottom. For example, capitalists are not evil --- they just don't have the choice if they want to stay in the game.

However, here is where my analysis had to stop because I need to go study how the system works. It's all too easy to say that capitalist system is in crisis. But take

a look: the rate of profit is at all time high, and businesses are expanding globally. The capitalist sees no crisis at all!

On this note, I will summarize and then go back to studying how the system works. As we've seen, the world is facing a fundamental crisis. No superficial solution could stretch the life of the system by much longer. We need a fundamental redesign in many aspects of our life. If human society will still be on earth in 100 years, it will look very, very different. That's our mission, and our fun.

I remain optimistic about the future because I have no choice --- it's my future, my only future. But if we fail, then that's OK. If human society collapses, then all other forms of life will have a much better time on earth. No one will lock them up in the zoo, at least.

Let's hope that the next intelligent species would look carefully at our fossils and study why we failed. I'm sure it will be a lesson worth learning.



The 10 Commandments of Saga

Jonathan "Omen Kid" Gardiner

1. Roberta is the law.
2. Thou shalt have thy ID ready before reaching Roberta.
3. Thou shalt lower thy standards. Significantly.
4. Plate to food! Plate to food!
5. Thou shalt cram far too many people in at the same table.
6. Thou shalt not go back for seconds, for they never taste as good.
7. Thou shalt not take too long at the wok.
8. Thou shalt gorge thyself on ice cream.
9. Thou shalt push in thy chair without having Vicky ask.
10. Thou shalt stack thy dishes properly.



We, the Web Kids.

Piotr Czerski

(translated by Marta Szreder)

(submitted by Ian McEwen)

There is probably no other word that would be as overused in the media discourse as 'generation'. I once tried to count the 'generations' that have been proclaimed in the past ten years, since the well-known article about the so-called 'Generation Nothing'; I believe there were as many as twelve. They all had one thing in common: they only existed on paper. Reality never provided us with a single tangible, meaningful, unforgettable impulse, the common experience of which would forever distinguish us from the previous generations. We had been looking for it, but instead the groundbreaking change came unnoticed, along with cable TV, mobile phones, and, most of all, Internet access. It is only today that we can fully comprehend how much has changed during the past fifteen years.

We, the Web kids; we, who have grown up with the Internet and on the Internet, are a generation who meet the criteria for the term in a somewhat subversive way. We did not experience an impulse from reality, but rather a metamorphosis of the reality itself. What unites us is not a common, limited cultural context, but the belief that the context is self-defined and an effect of free choice.

Writing this, I am aware that I am abusing the pronoun 'we', as our 'we' is fluctuating, discontinuous, blurred, according to old categories: temporary. When I say 'we', it means 'many of us' or 'some of us'. When I say 'we are', it means 'we often are'. I say 'we' only so as to be able to talk about us at all.

1.

We grew up with the Internet and on the Internet. This is what makes us different; this is what makes the crucial, although surprising from your point of view, difference: we do not 'surf' and the internet to us is not a 'place' or 'virtual space'. The Internet to us

is not something external to reality but a part of it: an invisible yet constantly present layer intertwined with the physical environment. We do not use the Internet, we live on the Internet and along it. If we were to tell our bildungsroman to you, the analog, we could say there was a natural Internet aspect to every single experience that has shaped us. We made friends and enemies online, we prepared cribs for tests online, we planned parties and studying sessions online, we fell in love and broke up online. The Web to us is not a technology which we had to learn and which we managed to get a grip of. The Web is a process, happening continuously and continuously transforming before our eyes; with us and through us. Technologies appear and then dissolve in the peripheries, websites are built, they bloom and then pass away, but the Web continues, because we are the Web; we, communicating with one another in a way that comes naturally to us, more intense and more efficient than ever before in the history of mankind.

Brought up on the Web we think differently. The ability to find information is to us something as basic, as the ability to find a railway station or a post office in an unknown city is to you. When we want to know something - the first symptoms of chickenpox, the reasons behind the sinking of 'Estonia', or whether the water bill is not suspiciously high - we take measures with the certainty of a driver in a SatNav-equipped car.

We know that we are going to find the information we need in a lot of places, we know how to get to those places, we know how to assess their credibility. We have learned to accept that instead of one answer we find many different ones, and out of these we can abstract the most likely version, disregarding the ones which do not seem credible. We select, we filter, we remember, and we are ready to swap the learned information for a new, better one, when it comes along.

To us, the Web is a sort of shared external memory.

We do not have to remember unnecessary details: dates, sums, formulas, clauses, street names, detailed definitions. It is enough for us to have an abstract, the essence that is needed to process the information and relate it to others. Should we need the details, we can look them up within seconds. Similarly, we do not have to be experts in everything, because we know where to

find people who specialise in what we ourselves do not know, and whom we can trust. People who will share their expertise with us not for profit, but because of our shared belief that information exists in motion, that it wants to be free, that we all benefit from the exchange of information. Every day: studying, working, solving everyday issues, pursuing interests. We know how to compete and we like to do it, but our competition, our desire to be different, is built on knowledge, on the ability to interpret and process information, and not on monopolising it.

2.

Participating in cultural life is not something out of ordinary to us: global culture is the fundamental building block of our identity, more important for defining ourselves than traditions, historical narratives, social status, ancestry, or even the language that we use. From the ocean of cultural events we pick the ones that suit us the most; we interact with them, we review them, we save our reviews on websites created for that purpose, which also give us suggestions of other albums, films or games that we might like. Some films, series or videos we watch together with colleagues or with friends from around the world; our appreciation of some is only shared by a small group of people that perhaps we will never meet face to face. This is why we feel that culture is becoming simultaneously global and individual. This is why we need free access to it.

This does not mean that we demand that all products of culture be available to us without charge, although when we create something, we usually just give it back for circulation. We understand that, despite the increasing accessibility of technologies which make the quality of movie or sound files so far reserved for professionals available to everyone, creativity requires effort and investment. We are prepared to pay, but the giant commission that distributors ask for seems to us to be obviously overestimated. Why should we pay for the distribution of information that can be easily and perfectly copied without any loss of the original quality? If we are only getting the information alone, we want the price to be proportional to it.

We are willing to pay more, but then we expect to receive some added value: an interesting packaging, a

gadget, a higher quality, the option of watching here and now, without waiting for the file to download.

We are capable of showing appreciation and we do want to reward the artist (since money stopped being paper notes and became a string of numbers on the screen, paying has become a somewhat symbolic act of exchange that is supposed to benefit both parties), but the sales goals of corporations are of no interest to us whatsoever. It is not our fault that their business has ceased to make sense in its traditional form, and that instead of accepting the challenge and trying to reach us with something more than we can get for free they have decided to defend their obsolete ways.

One more thing: we do not want to pay for our memories. The films that remind us of our childhood, the music that accompanied us ten years ago: in the external memory network these are simply memories. Remembering them, exchanging them, and developing them is to us something as natural as the memory of 'Casablanca' is to you. We find online the films that we watched as children and we show them to our children, just as you told us the story about the Little Red Riding Hood or Goldilocks. Can you imagine that someone could accuse you of breaking the law in this way? We cannot, either.

3.

We are used to our bills being paid automatically, as long as our account balance allows for it; we know that starting a bank account or changing the mobile network is just the question of filling in a single form online and signing an agreement delivered by a courier; that even a trip to the other side of Europe with a short sightseeing of another city on the way can be organised in two hours. Consequently, being the users of the state, we are increasingly annoyed by its archaic interface. We do not understand why tax act takes several forms to complete, the main of which has more than a hundred questions. We do not understand why we are required to formally confirm moving out of one permanent address to move in to another, as if councils could not communicate with each other without our intervention (not to mention that the necessity to have a permanent address is itself absurd enough.)

There is not a trace in us of that humble acceptance displayed by our parents, who were convinced that administrative issues were of utmost importance and who considered interaction with the state as something to be celebrated. We do not feel that respect, rooted in the distance between the lonely citizen and the majestic heights where the ruling class reside, barely visible through the clouds. Our view of the social structure is different from yours: society is a network, not a hierarchy. We are used to being able to start a dialogue with anyone, be it a professor or a pop star, and we do not need any special qualifications related to social status. The success of the interaction depends solely on whether the content of our message will be regarded as important and worthy of reply. And if, thanks to cooperation, continuous dispute, defending our arguments against critique, we have a feeling that our opinions on many matters are simply better, why would we not expect a serious dialogue with the government?

We do not feel a religious respect for 'institutions of democracy' in their current form, we do not believe in their axiomatic role, as do those who see 'institutions of democracy' as a monument for and by themselves.

We do not need monuments. We need a system that will live up to our expectations, a system that is transparent and proficient. And we have learned that change is possible: that every uncomfortable system can be replaced and is replaced by a new one, one that is more efficient, better suited to our needs, giving more opportunities.

What we value the most is freedom: freedom of speech, freedom of access to information and to culture. We feel that it is thanks to freedom that the Web is what it is, and that it is our duty to protect that freedom. We owe that to next generations, just as much as we owe to protect the environment.

Perhaps we have not yet given it a name, perhaps we are not yet fully aware of it, but I guess what we want is real, genuine democracy. Democracy that, perhaps, is more than is dreamt of in your journalism.

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Section: Lies

Horoscopes

Allison McCarthy

Pisces (February 19th--March 20th): The fourth house of Mercury is in ascendance this week--now is a good time to read that Hampshire missed connections Tumblr for like four hours, trying to see if you ever come up on it.

Aries (March 21st--April 19th): If it's five hours, that's okay too.

Taurus (April 20th--May 20th): This is a good time to lead the way on a project! Your originality is unusually heightened, so go ahead and cut that little twerp who keeps trying to take charge. End them. Today is your day.

Gemini (May 21st--June 21st): Your mom's probably going to email you something along the lines of "sorry ally didn't get you anything for Valentines because we got the dog some chocolates instead". Even though Valentines was a while ago, it's okay to still resent this. Dogs can't even eat chocolate, okay???

Cancer (June 22nd--July 22nd): Check under your bed, there's a mason jar you forgot about down there. I told you to clean your room, but no, nobody ever listens.

Leo (July 23rd--August 22nd): Keep it in your pants and stop questioning my goddamn horoscopes.

Virgo (August 23rd--September 22nd): Go eat some salad or something, whateverrrrrrrrr.

Libra (September 23rd--October 23rd): Libraaa, your sign is so boring, like it's just a scale. Get a spirit animal.

Scorpio (October 24th--November 21st): So if you posted about dead presidents on the missed connections Hampshire tumblr I'm pretty sure I know the lady you meant so why don't you post some more because it's soooooooooo difficult for me to be nosy about this with so little information to go on, uuuuuuuuuuuugh.

Sagittarius (November 22nd--December 21st): Gallon of milk for \$2.38 with a silver coin at the Big Y! Venus loves those Big Y savings! Don't forget your card!

Capricorn (December 22nd--January 19th): Pluto is alignment this week, but Venus is on the rise as well--you will desire both companionship and death. Consider stalking!

Aquarius (January 20th--February 18th): Did anyone else see that hairwrap guy last week? He was great! He gave really great hairwraps, if you missed it, feel disappointed--the pom poms at the end contain your wishes.

Ophicius (???--???): Ooooooooooooooh, sorry, still don't know what you are! Like a lion, right? Sorry whatever, eat some salad, you're fine, you're doing great.



Section: Hate

But Seriously, Folks

The Omen policy is to publish all submissions which are not anonymous or libelous. "The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it." The articles in the Omen are not endorsed by the Omen as a publication or the Omen editorial and layout staff.

We've put this warning here because we think the next articles may be triggering to victims of sexual trauma. We encourage everyone to send in responses to the Omen to any article, and we will publish them all according to our policy:

"We publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous...

... Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)"

Submit any responses to OMEN@HAMPSHIRE.EDU or come to a layout alternate Thursdays at 8 in the Merrill Basement.

The next Omen layout is March 8th.

Intent and Culpability

(Trigger Warning)

Devin Morse

Vol. 38, #3

A week or so ago I shared an article “Unwanted Sex vs. Rape” on my Facebook profile. The article can be found here: <http://http://goodmenproject.com/gender-sexuality/how-feminism-hates-women-unwanted-sex-vs-rape/> While it has some problems (for example, turning rape into a men vs. women issue and blaming feminism) it expressed many of the same issues I have had with the dialogue concerning consent and rape. After posting this, a heated discussion followed. While there are many points in the discussion that I would like to cover, I would like to respond to a particular statement that was made during the discussion, as I think a response to it provides a good encapsulation of the problems I have:

“I think that a lot of people can commit rape without knowing that they've done it, and that doesn't make it not rape.”

To see what I think is problematic about this statement, let's consider murder. (The case of, I mean.) Is it possible for someone to commit murder without knowing that they've done it? For simplicity, let's suppose that this person is not intoxicated, hypnotized, etc. - that is, is it possible for someone, with full possession of their mental faculties, to commit murder without realizing it? It seems to me that the answer is obviously no. It is possible for someone to kill someone else without realizing that that would be the outcome of their actions, and if this is the result of gross negligence it may be considered manslaughter - but it is not murder. The crime of murder requires intent to kill on the part of the perpetrator. Furthermore, this isn't just an issue of law: in general, we base our ethical judgements of culpability on the intent of the actor.

Now, if we define rape merely as the forcing of someone to have sex against their will, it would

indeed be possible to rape someone without realizing it. However, we are concerned with the crime of rape, that is, an action for which the perpetrator is held morally culpable and deserving of a certain level of punishment. In this case, it is necessary not only that person A forced person B to have sex against B's will, but that A had intent to do so, which in this case would mean that they were fully aware that person B did not want to have sex and only did so because they were forced, either physically or psychologically. (Cases where someone could be reasonably expected to be aware of this fact might be considered to be similar to manslaughter in regards to culpability.) Therefore, it is not possible to commit rape without realizing it.

Of course, it is true that person B might feel raped, and that they experience the same feelings of violation and trauma that a rape victim would. Furthermore, these feelings are real, valuable, and deserving of acknowledgement. But they should not be the basis of our legal/ethical judgements, no more than feeling that someone murdered your friend makes that person a murderer, even if these feelings cause you extreme pain (of course, there is a distinction in that in the case of murder it was an act committed against someone else - perhaps a better example would be a case where one feels assaulted and/or threatened).

The question we need to ask, then, is how do we go about fully acknowledging this person's feelings without convicting, either legally or socially, the person who they feels raped them? To my mind, the answer comes in being clear about the context in which such feelings are valuable, but I don't know how the details would be filled in. Also, consent is an awesome thing, and in my opinion very important: how, then, do we promote consent without unduly punishing those who make mistakes in regards to it by convicting them (once again legally or socially) of “rape”? “Rape” is a big word. We need to be careful how we apply it.



***When it Comes to Rape, Err on the Side
of Caution
An Equally Unendorsed Counterpoint***

Fiona Stewart-Taylor

Dudes, ladies, others:

If you are not sure if you are raping someone, you
should stop! Seriously.

Here are some helpful hints to prevent you from raping
unawares.

Did they say no?
Are they struggling?

Did they do anything but give an explicit and
enthusiastic yes?

You should stop having sex with them!

If you're not sure, consider halting the action to ask
them to sign a legally binding contract, specifically
enumerating what they're into and give consent to for
the evening.

Employ a lawyer on retainer to help you make sure
you've covered everything!

Handy hint:

If you're worried about keeping copies on hand, get the
contract silk screened onto your pillow! They can sign
in whiteboard marker!



***A response to a few points the Omen
Staff made about my other article
(the gist of which was that they
disagreed with it)***

Devin Morse

First, I don't consider this to be the most
important issue regarding rape. After all, the
persistence of rape, rape culture, and related issues still
need to be combatted, and urgently. I do think this is
an issue of some importance, and I do not want it to be
forgot. But it is one, relatively tiny aspect of the issue of
rape.

Secondly, I recognize that there has historically
been a culture of victim-blaming in regards to rape,
and that much of the current view on rape is an
attempt to combat this. Furthermore, it is possible th
we need to view rape this way to avoid victim-blamir
as it can be very difficult to establish intent. In this
case, my point would be that this view of rape is still
problematic, but it might be be the least-bad.

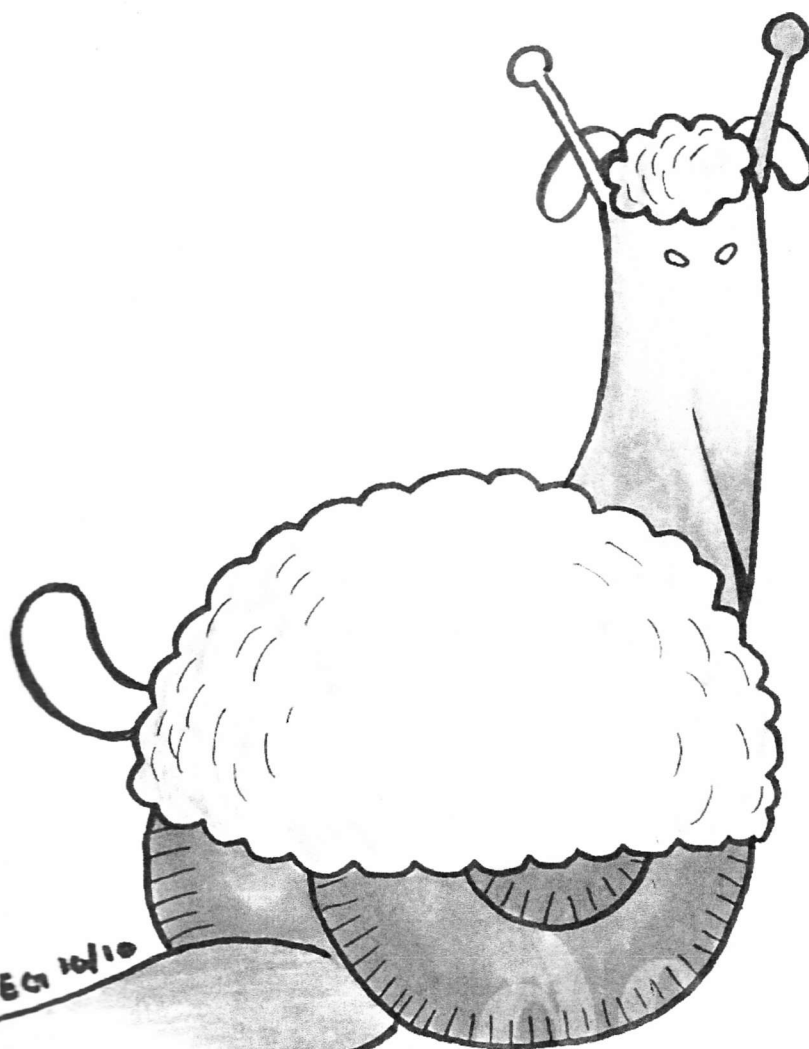
Third, I did not really cover issues of cases in
which people are not fully capable of giving consent.
While I also have some issues with such theories of
consent, I would also say that it is definitely rape if
someone has sex with someone who they know is no
fully capable of giving consent.

Fouth, consent is REALLY AWESOME AND
IMPORTANT. I can't emphasize that enough. What
I'm saying is that we may need to rethink how we tall
about consent and it's relationship to rape.

Fifth, I also want to emphasize that I do not
wish to trivialize the feelings of people who feel raped
These feelings are significant, valuable, and deserving
of acknowledgement. Furthermore, they are possibly
– in fact probably – an indication that rape did in
fact take place. But it is my opinion that their value
does not lie in the legal/ethical context, where we are

judging someone culpable and punishing them for a crime. What I want to know is how to acknowledge the significance and value of these feelings without ruining the life of the person who they feel victimized them by applying the label of "rapist" to them and punishing them for rape, in such cases where that person did not have the required intent to commit a crime. I don't know how to do this, or if it's even possible.

Finally, these are my opinions. I have tried to express them as clearly, responsibly, and logically as possible, but I recognize that they may be wrong. The article should be viewed as a suggestion about how we may need to rethink our discussion. I have complete respect for people who disagree with me, including the person I was responding to. I welcome arguments against me. This is too important an issue for us to not be able to find the right answer.





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